

BOYS AND GIRLS

Can You Answer?

Can you put the spider's web back in its place
That once has been swept away?
Can you put the apple again on the bough
Which fell at your feet to-day?
Can you put the lily-cup back on the stem,
And cause it to live and grow?
Can you mend the butterfly's broken wing,
That you crushed with a baby blow?
Can you put the bloom again on the grape,
Or the grape again on the vine?
Can you put the dewdrops back on the flowers,
And make them sparkle and shine?
Can you put the petals back on the rose?
If you could, would it smell as sweet?
Can you put the flower again in the husk,
And show me the ripened wheat?
Can you put the kernel back in the nut?
Or the broken egg in its shell?
Can you put the honey back in the comb,
And cover with wax each cell?
Can you put the perfume back in the vase,
When once it has sped away?
Can you put the cornstalk back on the corn,
Or the down on the catkin—say?
You think that my questions are trifling,
dear;
Let me ask you another one:
Can a hasty word be ever unsaid,
Or an unkind deed undone?
—Christian Globe.

The Piper Patch.

(By Annie Hamilton Donnell, in the 'Sabbath School Visitor'.)

Rick Leavitt hoed his way down the third row. At the half-way place he unbent his broad shoulders and took a 'breathing spell.' He was big and brown and brawny; and the July gladness was in him.

'We're coming on,' he nodded to the fantastic figure in the middle of the patch. The figure nodded back. Then Rick laughed.

'You old beauty, you!' he called; 'I wish you didn't remind me so much of Rick Leavitt. Catch me using his old clothes next time!'

In a sudden whiff of breeze the figure in the middle of the corn patch shook as if with mirth. A crow lighted on one of his arms and peered inquisitively and unafraid into his face.

'Caw! Caw!' scoffed the bird, and it sounded to Rick as if he said, 'Oh, pshaw!'

That corn patch was going to send him to Merton Academy next term. It was his corn patch, little green blades, weeds, scarecrow, and all. He had plowed and planted its acre and a half himself, and by the middle of next week he would have hoed it. Wait and see!

Down the third row, up the fourth. Another breathing space at the halfway mark, again. This time Rick's eyes wandered to the Piper Patch—oh, the Piper Patch! He laughed at it as he looked, but there was scorn in his voice. Call that a corn patch! Unkempt, straggling little hills, and weeds, weeds, weeds!

'There'll not be an ear o' corn on it, most likely. If nobody hoes it, there'll not. Catch Andy Piper hoeing it!'

Catch any of the Pipers doing anything! Rick's gaze went on up-meadow to the little brown blotch of a house just in sight. When the Pipers painted their house or hoed their corn, it would be the year nineteen hundred and never!

Up the fourth row, down the fifth. It took time; the rows were long. It grew hotter and hotter with the approach of noon. Rick mopped his brown face vigorously. He rested a little longer at the mid-row station. Then it was he made his discovery in the Piper Patch.

'Well, I should say!' he exclaimed, suddenly. Of all things—where had that scarecrow over there appeared from? It hadn't been there the last time he looked.

In the corner of the untidy little patch it stood. It swayed a little, but there was no breeze now. Hold on—it was moving! It had sat down!

'I should say!' exclaimed Rick, in amazement.

The scarecrow turned at the sound of his voice and nodded at him solemnly.

'Hello,' it called out.

'Mysie Piper, what on earth are you doing over there?' was his rejoinder.

'Me? I'm scarecrowin'. I had to come myself, 'count of there not bein' any other old clo'es. We wear all o' ours, at our house.'

'But I don't see what you need of a scarecrow in that patch of weeds—he checked himself hastily. Even a Piper might have feelings.

'To keep the crows off,' answered the little scarecrow gravely. She had risen and come to the dividing fence between the two lots. 'That's what you have yours for, isn't it? Oh, my, isn't he beautiful! I'm going to stay here right along, scarecrowin'. I'm bound the crows shan't get my corn.'

'Your corn?'

'Yes, it's mine. Andy only planted it an' I paid him for that. I gave him all my sugar for a month. Andy'll do things for sugar.'

Rick's gaze drifted from the shabby little scarecrow to the shabby little patch. The connection between the two puzzled him. What could the little scarecrow do with the corn—if there should be any?

'Going to sell it?' he asked. The child's face grew eager and wistful.

'You'd better b'lieve I am!' she laughed, 'if—the same doubt that had pervaded Rick's mind haunted hers dimly, 'if—you think there'll be some, don't you?'

'Some, I guess,' he said.

'Well, I'm goin' to sell it, that's what. I'm goin' to buy—Oh, I'm 'fraid you'll go an tell! It's a secret. If I thought you wouldn't—'

'I'll not,' Rick laughed.

'Cross your heart?'

'Cross my heart.'

'An' hope to never?'

'Hope to never.'

'Then I'm goin' to buy Grandfather Piper some meeting clothes with my corn money. Grandfather Piper's been waiting to go to meeting 'most forever. He's given it up now, but I haven't. He says he's going to wait and go to the Lord's meeting, in the Land o' Promise, but I say—the little scarecrow laughed softly, as if to herself—'I say grandfather's going to meeting here! I'm going to buy him some store clothes to go in. I've always thought I'd love to go along with him, but I guess there will not be corn enough. It's a kind of mussy looking paten, isn't it? I guess Andy thought there wouldn't be sugar enough to amount to much—oh, my, there's a crow! Oh, he's digging it up!' And away scurried the little figure to its 'scarecrowin'.

Rick Leavitt went back to his hoeing. Queer, new thoughts kept time to the regular strokes of his hoe—new Piper thoughts.

Suddenly, Rick stopped hoeing. He had not been able to see that last hill very well.

'She's been waiting, too, but ther'll not be corn enough—I guess she's right!' he laughed unsteadily. There wouldn't be any unless the patch was hoed over. There wasn't any doubt about that.

Rick glanced over at the Piper Patch—hello, what had become of the little scare—

'She's laid down on her job,' the boy muttered, and the seriousness in his voice atoned for the slang. The little Piper scarecrow was asleep!

The sun, directly overhead now, shone down unmercifully into the little upturned face.

'She'll have the sunstroke,' Rick thought uneasily. Then without further delay he strode across to the dividing fence, leaping the corn rows in his path. He leaped the fence, too, and strode on to the little sleeping scarecrow. He took off his wide-rimmed straw hat and tilted it gently over the child's face.

Then Rick looked round him. He could not remember to have been in the Piper Patch before, and close, it looked even worse than from a softening distance. But the little scarecrow was here, and the sight of her, asleep under the big straw hat, softened the boy's disgust. The little scarecrow was not to blame.

An instant more, Rick stood looking at the

revel of weeds that shut him in. Then he righted his hoe and attacked them.

'I'm all over here—might as well,' he muttered, as if in self-defense. And bareheaded in the noon sunshine he hoed all round the little Piper scarecrow, till she lay asleep in a small oasis in the desert of weeds.

Rick had allowed himself a week to finish up his acre and a half, but it took longer than that on account of his secret trips to the Piper Patch. He took advantage of the absence of the little scarecrow for those. Gradually, the shabby little patch took on trimness and order. The day Rick hoed the last hill in it, Andy Piper came strolling down the fields. He stood and watched Rick for a while, without being perceived. A long, low whistle was what announced his presence. Rick wheeled about.

'Well,' he said grimly, 'how do you like the looks of it? Is it hoed to suit you?'

Andy Piper's good-natured, indolent face flushed crimson.

'See here,' Rick said suddenly, 'this is first rate corn land. Why don't you enlarge your patch, Andy—I mean the little scarecrow's—I mean Mysie's patch?' He tripped badly, and in spite of themselves both boys laughed. The ice was broken. Andy surveyed the adjacent uncultivated land dubiously.

'It would be an awful lot o' work,' he muttered.

'Work!' Rick Leavitt laughed derisively. 'Supposing it is a lot! Work doesn't hurt anybody. I tell you it's good for a chap! Look at me, will you? See that muscle! Now show me yours.' He bared his arm proudly, but Andy drew back, refusing to expose his.

'I—I haven't any muscle,' he muttered shamefacedly.

'Well, you go ahead and plow up some more o' this land and plant it to corn and see if you don't get some!' Rick laughed. 'Honest, I mean it, Andy. There's time enough—some of the crop will be a little later, that's all. Carry out your rows as long as mine, and widen your piece out over there on the other side. All that land is lying there wasted now. Say, you go ahead, Andy, and I'll help.'

'Honest?'

'Honest.'

'I haven't any plow.'

'I have.'

'Nor harrow.'

'I have. You do the handwork and I'll do the machine. Look here, I want to tell you something, Andy,' and moved by some impulse Rick told the little scarecrow's story; Andy listened.

'Poor gran-daddy!' Rick heard him mutter, and then, 'Poor little kid!'

'I'll do it!' Andy cried aloud. 'See if I don't make this old patch get the little girl some, too!'

The plan succeeded. For days the boys worked side by side—Andy as hard as Rick.

It was a good corn year. Nature aided the two boys. In due time the crops were cut and hauled to the mill. The Piper crop was almost as large as the Leavitt crop.

The last Sunday before Rick was to go to Merton to the academy, he arrived at church a little early. In his abstraction he had not noticed that the people were straggling in and settling into their places in the pews. When he looked up, he gave a little start, for Grandfather Piper and the little scarecrow—no, no, not that now! Grandfather Piper and little, trim, whole Mysie were going up the aisle. The old, old figure stooped painfully, along, but the young one trudged beside it, grave and straight.

That was not all. Behind the old man and the child walked Andy—Andy! Rick's eyes widened in wonder. He scarcely knew the boy.

'It's the "Piper Patch,"' Rick thought.

What It Means.

'As I have loved you,' means love that is sweet and gentle to all men, who have many rudenesses and meannesses, who are selfish and faulty, who have sharp corners and vexing ways.—Rev. J. R. Miller, D.D.